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EDUCATIONAL WRITINGS

Professor Dewey has brought together in a single volume¹ his philosophy of education. Up to this time his educational writings have been scattered and have dealt with single problems. At times he has written theoretical papers dealing with such matters as the nature of interest and discipline. At other times he has described concrete school situations, as in his recent book on *Schools of Tomorrow*. Throughout all of these earlier writings there has appeared a certain fundamental view regarding school work and school organization. Not only so, but the books which Professor Dewey has written on subjects other than education also exhibit his fundamental social philosophy and furnish to the student of education the material out of which a general view can be constructed. This fundamental view, which has been expounded in part, has attracted many sympathetic students. These and many new students will be helped and stimulated by the fact that Professor Dewey has brought together all of his principles into a single statement.

Like other great educational reformers of our generation, Professor Dewey has contended for an enlargement of the scope of education. Education is not merely a matter of training the mind in the acquisition of certain items of information. Education is a part of the whole social scheme and is intended to enlarge the life of the individual, not only in matters of intellect, but also in matters of habit and social adjustment, in emotional reactions and appreciation of the world.

This broader view of education affects the school, for it calls for a richer course of study and a modification of the methods of discipline and instruction. It reaches beyond the school, however, and becomes a basis for a social philosophy. Education thus

¹ *Democracy and Education*. By John Dewey. New York: Macmillan, 1916. Pp. 434.

becomes practically synonymous with the whole concept of individual development and social enlargement.

One should distinguish, as he reads Professor Dewey's book, between a general philosophy of education and a practical application of this philosophy in school organization. This distinction is not made by Professor Dewey, and undoubtedly would not be regarded by him as necessary. He would assume that the ideal school should realize all of the ends which he describes as the true ends of a complete educational system. Wherever school organization, as at present organized, is incapable of following the ideals laid down in a complete philosophy, the school must be condemned as incomplete and ineffectual. Wherever social conditions make it impossible to realize this complete ideal of education, social ideals are in need of revision. Dr. Dewey would undoubtedly assent to the statement that his philosophy is frankly a philosophy of ideals—of remoter and more complete goals than can be achieved in any single institution of the present day and generation. He would hardly admit these distinctions, however, in such a way as to give to the practical teacher any ground for complacency in the shortcomings of the present school system.

Taking Professor Dewey's philosophy, then, as it stands, we find that he is constantly reiterating the statement that education involves the whole social environment. Indeed, environment is nothing more nor less than the conditions which surround the individual in his growth. Whatever these conditions are, the adjustment of the individual to these conditions as a general life problem is synonymous with the educational problem. Whatever is in social practice must be brought into the child's experience and must be made a vital part of that experience. Thus society's industrial activities must not be omitted from the educational scheme. Indeed, the divorcing of intellectual life from industry was one of the fallacies of an older dualistic philosophy. There is no justification in modern society or in modern thinking for this dualism that separates industry from social life. There is no justification for the separation of individual behavior from the general social demand. Indeed, it is only through practical efforts to become a part of society that the child realizes the demands of society upon him.

Mere thinking about social situations is not desirable in the school. We ought to plunge the pupils immediately into forms of social endeavor which will train them in the realization of society's needs and society's modes of conduct. According to this philosophy, there is no reason why the school should be regarded as an agency which prepares for later life. If the life of the child is fostered at each stage of his development in a social environment which is natural to the life of that period, there will ultimately grow up an adjustment of the child to society which will be the true education of that child. Such an adaptation to social needs ought to go on indefinitely. The school merges, therefore, according to this philosophy, directly into the later life of the adult. Whatever individual education is acquired in the school ought to go on until it is consummated in individual life of the later period.

The setting of any artificial exercise as the goal of educational training is to be resented as formalistic and distracting. It takes a child away from a perfectly natural problem which grows out of the present environment and aims to substitute something that is so remote from his present life that it will give him a wholly artificial attitude, not only toward the present problems, but also toward the later problems which he must face as an adult.

It is evident from this general statement that Professor Dewey is very much in sympathy with play as a formula for education. Play is a form of activity which is of interest because it realizes the child's desire for activity. It does not lay so much emphasis on results as it does upon the mere performance of the activities themselves. It is also evident from this philosophy that Professor Dewey will be especially interested in geography and history, because these are the two bodies of intellectual material that most fully reveal the life of society as a whole.

The later chapters of the book deal with certain broader theoretical considerations. Here one finds the definition of the philosophy of education and a treatment of the theories of morals and of knowledge which are involved in the author's general positions. One finds also a discussion of the antithesis between the individual and the world and between vocational and cultural aspects of the course of study.

The book is a very stimulating source of ideas for anyone who wishes to systematize his general thinking on educational theory. The book has in it very few discussions of concrete educational situations. It is in no sense of the word a book of methods or a book of concrete prescriptions about school activities. It is a philosophy of education rather than a handbook on school organization. It is one of a group of books that have recently appeared summarizing the general theoretical thinking of philosophical students of educational problems. It is in sharp contrast with the empirical investigations which are being made in many quarters dealing with actual school situations, and it represents a type of thinking which will undoubtedly be regarded by many readers as remote from the actual school practices.

It will be difficult to evaluate this general statement of Professor Dewey without a clear recognition of the motives of the author and of his general point of view. For example, it would be extraordinarily difficult to say that this doctrine does or does not work in the actual organization of a school system. If one could find a school system that aimed to realize Professor Dewey's ideals, but did not succeed well with what is ordinarily demanded in a school system, the defense for such a school system would doubtless be that it does not aim to meet the ordinary demands made on the public schools. On the other hand, if a school system does not succeed in achieving all of the ends described in Professor Dewey's philosophy, its officers are likely to offer the defense that it is quite impossible to accomplish within any school system all that is demanded of this general philosophy of education. As pointed out above, this philosophy reaches into the mature life of the individual, and the consummation of an education under this philosophy is part of the consummation of individual social adjustment even in its most remote adult stages.

At this point we may with propriety enlarge by way of criticism the statement that was made in the earlier paragraphs of this review. A school system as organized in practical life deals only with one phase or portion of education. The school cannot assume full responsibility for all of the activities of children; nor can it extend its influence beyond the early period of life during which

a child is acquiring some of the fundamentals of knowledge. The ordinary school must, therefore, anticipate some of its own limitations. It must decide that it is quite impossible to follow the individual into the later stages of adult life, and it must take advantage of its organized contact with the children of a community to anticipate so far as possible some of those later needs which are recognized in Professor Dewey's philosophy, but are pointed out as dangerous to incorporate into the early stages of education. It is indeed dangerous to try to teach a ten-year-old child about the adjustments of society which he will not need until he is twenty, but if society is just about to lose its organized hold on a ten-year-old child and if society cannot depend upon this child to carry on his own education in an intelligent way, it is probably economical for society to run the risk of being formal; society probably ought to give this ten-year-old child as much preparation for later adult life as can possibly be supplied.

Such considerations as these may help us to draw the distinction between the philosophy of education and the empirical necessity of conducting a school. The school must have a program; that program must be limited in its compass. The school must deal with certain situations that can be systematized and controlled. There are many social situations which the school cannot present and cannot organize in its general systematic scheme of education. Professor Dewey's philosophy becomes in the light of such difficulties as these a statement of the goals toward which education should progress, a statement of the ideals which should be attained, but it cannot be safely looked upon as a daily program for a concrete school situation.

As the first output of the efficiency department of the school system of Dubuque, Iowa, there has appeared a monograph dealing with reading.¹ This investigation had for its purpose the measurement of "the efficiency or worth of the various systems of primary reading" which are used in Dubuque. The relative efficiency of the various systems was determined by comparing the achievement

¹ *Measuring Primary Reading in the Dubuque Schools.* Dubuque, Iowa: Harris & Anderson, 1916.

of groups of pupils in the mechanics of oral reading and in the rate and quality of silent reading. For this purpose, Gray's Standardized Paragraphs for oral reading and Starch's Silent Reading Tests Nos. 1, 2, and 3 were used. The pupils who were tested were chosen from grades I A, II B, and II A of six schools, one of which used the Beacon system, one the Horace Mann system, and four the Aldine system. In order that the final results might represent as accurately as possible the results secured by the respective systems, all pupils who had come in from other schools and those who had been irregular in attendance were eliminated from each group before the final summaries were made. The results showed that the group which had been taught by the Beacon system was superior to the other groups, both in oral reading achievement and in rate and quality of silent reading.

The problem which was undertaken in this investigation is a very important one. Supervisors and teachers alike are deeply interested in the relative merits of the various systems of primary reading. Any effort which contributes toward an adequate solution of the problem deserves commendation. Furthermore, the value of this study was enhanced by the character of the method which was employed. A series of exercises were arranged which would secure important facts and the results of these exercises were carefully reported. This body of facts, rather than mere personal opinion, was used in drawing conclusions. This type of procedure merits encouragement. An increasing number of classroom problems should be subjected to careful study of a similar character.

The conclusions which were reached in Superintendent Harris' report cannot be accepted as final, however. In the problem under consideration, there are a number of complicating factors. Among these might be mentioned differences in the pupils due to home environment and nationality, differences in previous training of the pupils, differences in the skill of teachers, etc. The report shows that some of these factors were considered by those making the investigation. The fact has already been mentioned that pupils who had come in from other schools and those who had been irregular in attendance were eliminated from each group which was tested. Furthermore, supplementary tests were given to gain evidence that

differences in the achievement of the various groups were not due to differences in the teaching power of the teachers. The report does not cover these matters in sufficient detail, however, to convince the reader that all these differences were adequately considered. Furthermore, only one school using the Beacon system was involved in the test, and the classes in this school were taught by teachers who were admittedly enthusiastic in favor of that system. In view of these facts, it is clear that additional studies must be made before any final conclusions can be reached. It is to be hoped that Superintendent Harris will carry his present investigation further and that in the near future a large number of cities will give this same problem equally serious consideration.

Children's drawings have been made the subject of frequent investigations. The lessons which have been drawn from these investigations have been applied to all of those phases of the course of study which have to do with observation and perception. Where children's drawings show a limited power of recognition, it has been concluded that all of the school subjects taken by these children would suffer from the type of immaturity exhibited in the drawings. On the other hand, where children have acquired through any given type of instruction ability to draw well, it has been assumed that they have learned to see and recognize the objects with which they are brought in contact.

Mr. Ayer¹ has made a careful statistical and experimental study of the different kinds of drawings that are exhibited in laboratory courses where pupils who are studying science have been required to make sketches of the objects which they observe. It appears from his studies that the ability to draw well in the sense of being able to make attractive looking sketches is in no wise correlated with the ability to understand and describe fully the objects studied. Good drawing in this sense of the word is therefore no guaranty of clear recognition of the objects studied. On the other hand, if the pupil is led to make an analysis of the object which he is observing so that he picks out the essential characteristics and recognizes these characteristics in their relations to each other, he

¹ *The Psychology of Drawing*. By Fred Carleton Ayer. Warwick & York, 1916. Pp. 186.

will make a sketch which is, perhaps, from the artist's point of view rough and irregular, but he will exhibit the relations truly and he will at the same time cultivate an insight into the characteristics of objects, which insight will serve his purposes as a student of science very much better than anything that accompanies the production of an attractive looking sketch. Analytical drawing is therefore the end to be sought in all scientific studies.

In presenting this thesis, Mr. Ayer has done the very great service of summarizing all of the earlier studies which have been made of children's drawings and of the drawings of primitive people. A large number of the foreign investigations which are not easily accessible to American students of education are included in his chapters on the literature of the subject. The experiments which he tried are described in sufficient detail so that they can be repeated and extended by any investigator who may be interested in following the same line of inquiry. The book is supplied with a general bibliography which will make it serviceable to students of drawing and to students of general education.

The title of Mr. Freeman's treatise,¹ *Experimental Education*, is borrowed from Meumann's German treatise on the same subject. Meumann called attention to the fact that laboratory methods can be employed in the investigation of school problems. He also pointed out that if such investigations are to be made, students of education must apply these methods to school problems in a special way and must not depend upon the psychologist in his general laboratory work to answer the special questions that have to do with the growth of mental activities in school children.

The general treatise which Meumann prepared on experimental education was a cross between experimental psychology and a study of classroom problems. Meumann's book has been the subject of frequent reviews, and some of the material in the German book has been made accessible through brief translations.

The systematic effort to organize a laboratory course which can accompany a course in educational psychology has, however, not

¹ *Experimental Education*. By Frank N. Freeman. Houghton Mifflin Co., 1916. Pp. 220.

been worked out by an American author until Professor Freeman published his new book entitled *Experimental Education*. This is a laboratory book dealing with the general processes of learning and with some experiments on the special school subjects. There is also a section on tests. The appendix contains the material for each one of the exercises, so that the laboratory equipment necessary to carry out these experiments is relatively small. The book will be very useful as a textbook in normal schools and college departments of education and will serve to introduce students of education to the technique of laboratory work in educational fields.

The investigations which have been made in scientific education up to this point have been very largely statistical in character. It is relatively easy to get together material for a statistical investigation. It is very much more laborious to work out the details of an experimental investigation. The experimental analysis of school subjects has consequently gone more slowly than the statistical study of these subjects. Just at the point at which statistical investigations are inadequate experimental analysis ought to begin. Statistical investigations show the extent to which whole groups of children exhibit efficiency in various lines, but these statistical investigations do not make it possible to find out the difficulties in which the individual becomes involved when he tries to follow the group as a whole. In order to deal with the individual there must be a careful analysis of the mental and physical processes exhibited by this individual in his learning of school work. This detailed analysis of the individual's difficulties is, as we have pointed out above, an elaborate and slow process as contrasted with the examination of the group by a statistical method. The importance, however, of analyzing the individual's difficulties can hardly be a matter of dispute and Dr. Freeman has rendered a service to the science of education in making available for the training of students certain typical experiments which will cultivate the laboratory attitude in these students.

One of the most important of the groups of studies which have been made in recent years in regard to elementary schools is that group which deals with the retardation and elimination of pupils.

The effect of these studies has been very great in changing the course of study and the mode of school organization. Indeed, it has been one of the common themes of discussion in educational gatherings to point out the responsibility of the school system for every child who is eliminated from the grades. Suggestions with regard to the modification of the course of study, through the introduction of vocational courses and through the elimination of material which does not seem to be appropriate for all of the children, have very frequently been made. That there was large justification for this attitude toward the problem on the part of the school itself is evidenced by the fact that in recent years the amount of retardation and elimination has been greatly reduced. There is, however, a certain amount of retardation and elimination which the school cannot control.

School officers who have been struggling with these cases will be greatly interested in a recent study made by Mr. Holley,¹ in which he points out clearly the responsibility of the home in a very large number of cases of elimination. The education of the parents is an important item in determining the length of schooling for pupils. If the parents are uneducated and unappreciative of school opportunities, the chances are large that a child will be allowed to drop out. The number of books that a child finds in the home is one of the best indexes of the probable continuation of the child in school. These conclusions are based upon careful studies of a number of school systems in the state of Illinois.

One very interesting and convincing section of the report deals with the school history of a number of adopted children. In these cases, as in the ordinary cases, it is found that the home environment is influential in determining the length of the child's course. These cases serve to eliminate the possibility that we are dealing, in the study of home conditions, with hereditary influences rather than with the daily influences.

A number of incidental facts about the home come out in the course of the investigation. It appears that the father and the

¹ *The Relationship between Persistence in School and Home Conditions.* By Charles Elmer Holley. Published as the Fifteenth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1916.

mother, in most of the homes investigated, are in a general way of the same educational level. That is, the school and intellectual associations are important in determining the marriages of the people in the communities investigated. There is no appreciable effect on persistence in school exercised by the size of the family. Truancy as one cause of retardation appears in very striking degree in those families which, because of lack of educational interest, offer the child little encouragement in his school work.

Mr Holley concludes that the popular notion which places responsibility for elimination upon the public school should be modified. This suggested modification of our interpretation of elimination probably ought not to go so far as to relax the efforts which are now being made to correct any deficiencies in school organization, but this report opens up a new series of important considerations for the school. Many of the difficulties here described cannot be overcome directly through the work of the classroom, but the school as a social agency must face the defects of the home quite as much as the defects of the individual child; and the school system as such finds as much a problem of education in the apathy of the homes as in the failure of the individual child to do his work successfully. It is important that the school building, in its wider uses, and the school officers, in their larger undertaking, should reach in some way the families from which retarded and eliminated children come.